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TOP SECRET

MT

Confidential Filing

Proposed BBC Panorama programme on  
British Intelligence

SECURITY

June 1980

Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date	Referred to	Date
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3-3-81							

PREM 19/587



B.B.C. <sup>Security</sup>  
Panorama

Did the Government bring pressure to bear on the BBC not to show a Panorama programme on security and intelligence?

DRAFT ANSWER

24

In July we learned that the BBC were approaching a number of people concerned with security matters to give interviews for a proposed Panorama programme on intelligence and security. The BBC were told that, in view of the potential risks to national security, people in Government service would be instructed not to give interviews or co-operate with those making the programme. But the BBC has, under its Charter, complete editorial freedom, and it was, and is, entirely within the responsibility of the BBC to decide whether to show such a programme and what to put in it.

Made my views known openly on  
a number of occasions - on (intelligence) - security -

The decision on any particular programme rests  
with the BBC.

Canadian - Burgess

No facilities are available to foreign  
journalists in their own interest U.K.  
telephone. Point in their services.



NOTES FOR SUPPLEMENTARIES

Q1. Has the BBC's attention been drawn to 'D' Notices?

A1. That is not necessary. The BBC is represented (by the Director of News and Current Affairs, Mr. Richard Francis) on the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee, which is responsible for 'D' Notices, and can be assumed to be well aware of their contents.

Q2. Does the Government propose to use /has the Government considered using/ its power of veto to stop the showing of this programme?

A2. No, I do not think that it would be appropriate to use the power of veto. It is much better to put the onus on the BBC to exercise their editorial freedom with a sense of responsibility.

Q3. How was the Government's decision to refuse co-operation conveyed to the BBC?

A3. I do not propose to add to what I have already said.

Q4. /Any questions about the contents of the programme?/

A4. That is entirely a matter for the BBC.



THE GUARDIAN  
3 FEBRUARY 1981

# BBC's security film cuts anger staff

By Stephen Cook

The anger of BBC staff over Sir Ian Trethowan's drastic cutting of a Panorama programme on the security services was confirmed yesterday by a meeting of leaders of all the corporation's National Union of Journalists' chapters.

More than 50 chapel fathers from radio and television stations in London and the country passed a resolution expressing alarm at the director-general's action. They took "the greatest exception to any form of censorship or improper pressure placed on any BBC journalist," they said.

Mr Ken Ashton, the NUJ general secretary, and Mr Tony Hearn, general secretary of the Association of Broadcasting Staff, are seeking a meeting with Sir Ian to ask why the cuts were made.

Yesterday's meeting made it clear that if the two general secretaries were denied access to Sir Ian or if he could give no satisfactory explanation, the NUJ would take "appropriate action" in consultation with other BBC unions.

The meeting heard that an article in the Guardian last week detailing the circumstances and nature of the cuts was accurate and that the extent of the cuts meant the programme was no longer worth transmitting.

The article described the involvement of the security services and police Special Branch in illegal phone tapping, sex scandals involving politicians, attempts to remove foreign rulers, and the passing on of false information.

The programme had been approved by the head of BBC-1 and of Current Affairs before Sir Ian apparently called for a cassette of the programme and insisted on the cuts. He has denied that he showed it to anyone from the Government.

The meeting, called to discuss the next BBC pay claim, apparently felt that Sir Ian should be pressed to allow the film to go ahead as approved by the immediate programme bosses.

Below: Sir Ian Trethowan



# Blunt's Oxford spy foray is revealed in vetoed film

by Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman

NEW LIGHT on the activities of Anthony Blunt, the former Soviet spy, is one of the items which have fallen under the editorial veto of Sir Ian Trethowan, the BBC's director-general. Trethowan has told the Panorama team that he is not happy about the evidence they have produced to back up allegations in an interview with Anthony Motion, an ex-MI5 agent.

After learning of the interview, Trethowan told the programme team that they must not contact any other former agents.

Reporters and researchers who worked on the film are this weekend mounting an attempt to convince Trethowan that the film should go out, although he has already made it clear that the 100-minute programme cannot be shown in its present form. He has strongly denied suggestions that his views have been influenced by Whitehall security chiefs, and says that his objections are purely on editorial grounds.

Motion's interview suggests that Blunt's spying activities extended further than has hitherto been revealed. The Sunday Times traced Motion yesterday at his home in Australia. He alleges that Blunt was active not only in Cambridge, but in Oxford as well.

He also claims that MI5, during inquiries about Blunt at Oxford, uncovered other Soviet agents who were "turned" by the British but not exposed; and that several "minor spies" were left alone because they were not important.

During the making of the programme, Motion, 49, described how MI5 learned finally of Blunt's treachery in 1964—15 years before he was publicly exposed. At that time Motion was a section chief with the security services and said he was asked to examine

Blunt's recruiting activities at Oxford. Up to now it has been thought that Blunt was only really active at Cambridge, where he had been an undergraduate and later a tutor. It was at Cambridge that he had met Maclean, Philby and Burgess—the latter, according to Blunt, recruiting him as a Soviet "talent spotter."

Motion said yesterday that he was a loyal British and Australian subject. "If the Home Office have decided that the BBC cannot screen that segment they must have good reason," he said. "I would oppose it only if such a move was a political decision."

Motion joined MI5 after a career with the Hussars and the Foreign Office. He was asked to investigate Blunt's Oxford connections because it was feared he had also recruited Soviet spies there. He said: "I first heard about Blunt in the early Sixties and was as mad as hell about it. But now I realise there was more to gain by not sending him to jail at the time."

Motion, now a restaurant owner and chairman of a regional tourist commission, said that he had not managed to pinpoint any obvious Blunt figures at Oxford. He added, however, that "several people had been discovered by MI5 at the time of Blunt's private con-

session in 1964, but few came under public scrutiny because they did not hold important positions.

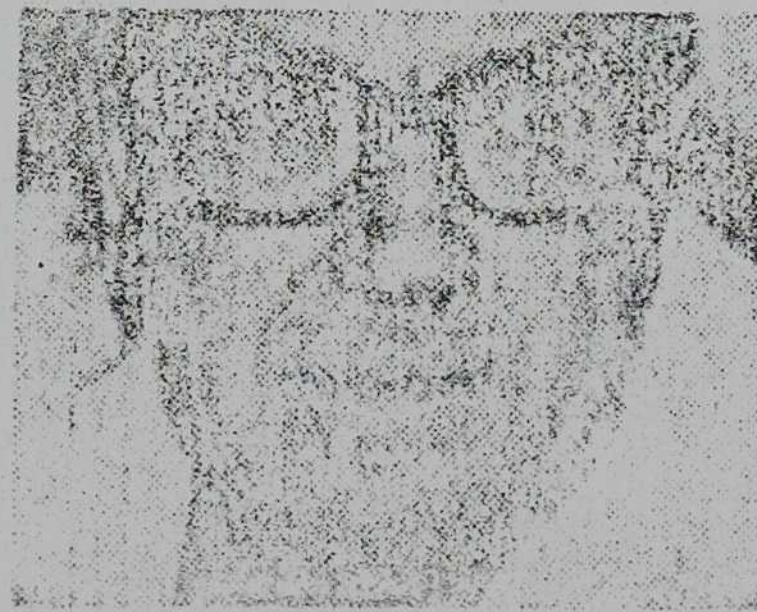
Motion says some "exposed" spies continued working with the knowledge of MI5 to help provide "counter-intelligence information"—a hallmark of the security services following their successful "double-cross" operations in the last war. Much of Motion's testimony is supported by the recollections of the poet Louis MacNeice, who died in 1963. In his book *The Strings are False*, published posthumously in 1965, MacNeice recalled in detail how Blunt, while at Cambridge, regularly visited Oxford left-wing students.

The Panorama row had been simmering for weeks when it finally became public last week. Although senior BBC executives in news and current affairs had approved the programme, Trethowan said that it was "unsuitable" for transmission. He told the Panorama team that parts of it were "speculative" and demanded a number of cuts, including the Motion revelations. But his decision led to claims, both from within the BBC and from outside, that he was trying to suppress the documentary simply because he did not want to risk offending Whitehall.

The Panorama team began on the programme last summer, with the full knowledge of Trethowan. Senior BBC executives say that they were aware that Trethowan had serious reservations.

Dr David Owen, the former foreign secretary, who was also interviewed by Panorama, told The Sunday Times yesterday that he had argued strongly for greater accountability of MI5 and MI6.

Additional reporting by  
Denis Reinhardt



Motion: ex-agent talks



THE GUARDIAN 30 JANUARY 1981

# Film dropped after Trethowan intervenes

By David Leigh

Large portions of a special edition of Panorama about the security services have been suppressed on the intervention of the BBC director-general, Sir Ian Trethowan. The film, although approved by senior BBC executives, will not now be shown.

Sir Ian took an unusual step two weeks ago which has puzzled BBC staff. He ordered a video cassette to be made of the 100-minute film, along with the transcript, which he took away for 15 days.

He then ordered portions to be struck out which BBC executives describe as covering 50-75 per cent of the material.

This included a sequence describing how the Special Branch passed false information

to a women's employer; and another sequence in which a former agent claimed to have arranged hundreds of illegal telephone taps for MI6—an activity which the Government denies takes place.

Another excised passage consisted of an interview with a named former MI5 agent, Anthony Motion.

The programme, called M15/M16 — the need to know, also covers claims of M15 involvement in the downfall of Lord Lambton, whose activities with prostitutes were made known to the News of the World.

It deals with the Profumo affair, another ministerial sex scandal; M16 recruitment of criminals in the Littlejohn affair; and M16 plots to liquidate

date Prime Minister Mossadeq of Iran and Colonel Nasser in Egypt.

There were interviews with Mr Merlyn Rees, the former Home Secretary who was in charge of domestic M15 phone-tapping, David Owen, former Foreign Secretary, and other MPs.

The Special Branch episode described how inaccurate political information was collected about a young woman, and subsequently made available to her employer. It said that Scotland Yard subsequently apologised.

The interviewee who discussed phone-taps said he had conducted "500 black bag jobs"—illegal phone taps subcontracted by M16 while ministers assured Parliament no such thing occurred.

The Panorama programme has been made openly. Many Fleet Street writers and specialists were consulted during its research, and Sir Arthur Franks and Sir Howard Smith, Callaghan appointees to head M16 and M15 were notified.

BBC staff believe that Mrs Thatcher expressed disquiet about the programme as long ago as last summer, and at one point the programme-makers received a directive from Sir Ian Trethowan which made it difficult to continue the programme; he banned them from contacting any agent or former agent of the security services.

The final programme was approved, before Sir Ian's intervention, by the then head of BBC-1, Mr Bill Cotton, and the head of current affairs, Mr

Dick Francis, who is also a member of the Whitehall-Fleet Street D-Notice Committee which exists to protect national security.

The BBC last night denied that Sir Ian had shown the cassette to anyone in the Government. It said the status of the programme was still uncertain and the alterations presented by Sir Ian were "suggestions" because he was editor-in-chief concerned with such a sensitive matter.

The Prime Minister's office declined to comment last night on whether consultations had taken place either between the BBC and Mrs Thatcher, or officials of the BBC and officials of the security services. The security services themselves do not admit that they have any official existence.



Ref. A04364

MR. SANDERS

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Panorama Programme on Privacy

I understand that the Home Office is providing notes for supplementaries this afternoon.

2. I can understand that, if this is raised, the Prime Minister will not want to be negative or show unconcern. But I hope, for her own sake, that she will be able to confine her substantive answers to generalities, and I should like to offer the following suggestions:

- (1) if there are questions about individual cases (e.g. the Jan Martin case) or the work of the police, she should refer the questioner to the Home Secretary (there is statutory machinery for investigating complaints against the police, and it may be right to refer some of these matters to them; if there is to be an investigation, Ministers will not want to prejudice it by comments in Parliament);
- (2) if there are questions about the work or operations of the Security Service, the Prime Minister should either stick to the line of "no comment on matters of intelligence or security", or (if the issue is relationships between the Security Service and police Special Branches) invite the questioner to put down a question to the Home Secretary, who is of course the Minister responsible both for the police and for the Security Service.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

3rd March, 1961



*cc. Mr Whitmore**Security*

Secretary: Rear Admiral W.N. Ash, CB, MVO

Telephones:

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Home: London - 01-431 1693

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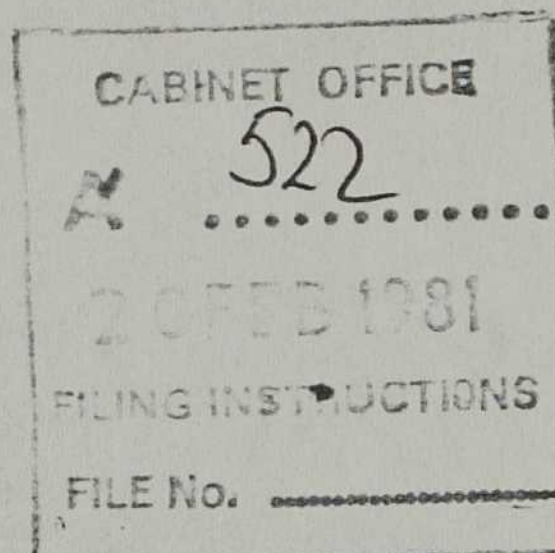


Room 6370  
Ministry of Defence  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Ref. DN/1323/DPBC

20 February 1981

Sir Frank Cooper  
Chairman, DPBC  
Ministry of Defence  
Room 6139  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
SW1



Blind copies to:  
Mr B Sheldon, Box 500  
Miss R Nockolds, Century House  
Mr A Cooper, GCHQ

*Dear Sir Frank,*

The "official" members of the DPBC will wish to be aware that the BBC, in the person of Alan Protheroe, the Assistant Director of News and Current Affairs, have been in touch with me in the last day or two on the projected Panorama programme on intelligence and security.

Specifically, Protheroe wanted guidance on whether a chart reported to show the organisation of one of the Agencies (which was not specified) would contravene D Notices. I advised that it would and should be omitted, and he confirmed subsequently that this has been done.

Protheroe described the programme as consisting largely of interviews with, on the one hand, Rusbridger, Tracey, Motion et al (whose claims, he said, the BBC found "unconvincing") and on the other, such people as Senator Huddleston, Dick Helms, David Owen and Merlyn Rees. He considered the programme to be of a philosophical nature, concerned with accountability, and that the contributions by the interviewees were expressions of opinion which would not be covered by D Notices. No information was given on editorial content. Protheroe had himself been carefully through the programme with D Notices in mind.

I said that I was in no position to comment on these or other parts of the programme without more specific knowledge of its content. Protheroe indicated that because of its nature, the BBC were unlikely to wish to submit the programme as a whole for D Notice scrutiny. I made it clear that nothing in our conversations should be taken as implying D Notice clearance for the programme and Protheroe confirmed that this was his understanding.

Protheroe has undertaken to get in touch with me at any time before the programme goes out on Monday, 23 February, should there be reason to seek further D Notice guidance.

I am copying this to Sir Brian Cubbon, Sir Arthur Hockaday and Sir Antony Acland and also to Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Prime Minister.**Very interesting.**for*

204

*MS.*

SECRET

*Lin Ash*





file

cc: J10  
FCO  
NIO

SECURITY

BK

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Panorama Programme on Security  
and Intelligence Services

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A04689 of 17 February 1981 reporting the latest state of play on the Panorama programme on the Security and Intelligence Services.

She does not regard the prospect of the programme being shown next Monday in its present form as a happy one, but she does not see what more we can do either to hold up the transmission of the programme or to make its content more acceptable.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Halliday (Home Office), Mr. Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Mr. Harrington (Northern Ireland Office).

C. A. WHITMORE

19 February 1981

KRB



PERSONAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A04689

PRIME MINISTER

ms

Prem. Minister.

Not a happy prospect; but - show  
of using the veto (which Minister has been  
asked not to do) - there is little more we  
can do.

17th

Panorama Programme on Security and Intelligence Services

The latest information I have on the preparations for this programme is that it is likely to be shown next Monday evening, 23rd February.

2. I think that we are down to one programme rather than two; but some of the material which has been taken out is likely to reappear in a later programme on privacy: that could deal with questions of interception and some of the likely material in the original script which dealt with techniques of eavesdropping and on access to computer data.

3. The indications are that by no means all of the material indicated by the Director General for excision will in fact be excised. The testimony of a number of people who claim to have worked in or for one or other of the intelligence and security services is likely to remain in.

4. I gather that a script of the programme is to be sent to the Secretary of the D Notices Committee. That will give the Secretary of the Committee an opportunity for proposing the omission of material which would be in clear conflict with D Notices. The protection of D Notices does not extend, however, to material which has been published elsewhere, as a good deal of the material in the proposed Panorama programme has been at one time or another.

5. In short, it looks as if Sir Ian Trethowan has not managed to clean the programme up to the extent we might have hoped. As Press reports have made clear, he has been exposed to considerable criticism and pressure within the BBC.

6. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

17th February, 1981

PERSONAL

CONFIDENTIAL



# THE GUARDIAN

Saturday February 7 1981

*by the programme is for  
broad cast, we are likely to get  
a story when it's very brief  
for some time, I am afraid.  
f.w.g.m.*

*CLIVE*

*I've asked Dwight  
for a line on this  
for Questions*

**S out  
terms  
nce  
mocrats**

cooperation within the EEC and worldwide, and a commitment to work for multi-lateral disarmament.

● To change company law and use profit-sharing to achieve partnership in industry. All employees should be involved in major decisions.

● Bridging the gap between rich and poor and privilege and deprivation. This must start at grassroots level, by giving citizens clearer rights against the State, protecting the rights of minorities, and spreading power as well as wealth.

Mr Steel's plan, which he described as "a framework for cooperation" is an obvious attempt to produce an agenda for agreement with the Labour rebels. Its endorsement by those at whom it is directed will assist Mr Steel in countering criticism from within his own ranks.

Mr Steel acknowledged last night that his programme did not include every item of Liberal Party policy. "This is only a beginning," he said. "But I want to ask the thou-

## US agency 'bugged' Labour MPs'

The man from Mincing Lane told Panorama that Americans fed secrets back to British intelligence. David Leigh reports

The US surveillance organisation, the National Security Agency, carries out illegal phone-tapping and bugging on Labour MPs and other "hostiles," with the deliberate connivance of Britain's security services who then have the information passed on to them.

This is one of the allegations in the Panorama programme on security which the Director-General of the BBC, Sir Ian Trethowan, ordered to be cut from the script, provoking the current row about censorship within the BBC.

One of those who makes the allegation and who gave an interview to Panorama is Mr James Rusbridger, a former commodity broker who says he worked for MI6 as a "courier" for seven years, smuggling about 100,000 dollars into Communist Europe, in 5-10,000 dollar parcels.

He frequently met MI6 men during these operations, he says from his present home in St Austell: they would discuss with him how they had circumvented the limits on surveil-

lance which the British public and Cabinet ministers believe exist, from the time of the Wilson government of 1964-1970.

The Prime Minister has on her desk, and is committed to publish, a report on British phone-tapping by Lord Diplock.

The NSA maintains a chain of supposedly secret bases in Britain, linked to the Post Office microwave towers. Some of these, such as Morwenstow, in Cornwall, collect data from spy satellites: another, at Menwith Hill, near Harrogate, intercepts all international calls.

Civil servants are warned in a Whitehall security handbook that all telephone calls over 50 miles distance go by radio relay and are liable to interception.

The NSA has much more money and equipment than MI5 and MI6 and has sophisticated bugging gear in addition: some of this, however, such as laser bugs which pick up reverberations of conversation from window-panes, was developed by the British at the

military electronic research laboratories at Baldoock, Hertfordshire.

Ministers say that warrants for phone-taps are always personally signed by them, and are handled either by the police for criminal inquiries, or through MI5 and the Post Office. The number of warrants admitted to is only a few hundred, although one warrant can cover a whole organisation, such as a trade union.

Mr Rusbridger says it was made clear to him, at dinners in London restaurants and at the "In and Out" club in Piccadilly where he met his case officers, that MI6 were determined to evade these limits.

While Harold Wilson, as he says in his memoirs, stopped MPs' phones from being tapped, security men were receiving training lectures in which they were told some Labour MPs were either Communist agents or in contact with Communist agents.

Mr Rusbridger says: "When I was told this, it was the first time I had heard of the initials

NSA and I had to ask what they were. I was told it was the Special Projects Division of the National Security Agency."

Mr Rusbridger, who is now retired, is not a political radical and believes it wrong to reveal details of individuals or operations which might endanger them. But he describes in the film how he was approached in 1963, when he was 35, and a commodity broker working for a Mincing Lane firm which did business with Eastern Europe.

"I got a phone call from a man who said he worked for an obscure economic intelligence department in the Foreign Office. He took me out to lunch in the West End, and buttered me up about market reports I used to write daily. He said he was new at the job and would I get him statistical information, about simple things.

"I suppose they were just testing me, but I sent in the odd report for six or seven months. Then two of them met me. They said, 'Will you do

something else for us — we want to take some money in to a chap in Prague?' I said 'who am I doing this for?' and they said 'the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service).'"

After that, said Mr Rusbridger, he was given packets of large-denomination dollar notes to deliver at irregular intervals to individuals in Eastern Europe, until 1969.

The smuggling continued when he moved to another firm, J. A. Goldschmidt, which he controlled, Mr Rusbridger said. His original employers knew nothing of his work.

As well as this routine activity as an MI6 agent, Mr Rusbridger describes how he helped the CIA in 1963 to damage the Cuban economy: in concert with a "front" Wall Street commodity brokers (which he names), he was given a \$500,000 cash advance with which to conduct operations to ruin the price of sugar on the world market by heavy selling of 100,000 tons of sugar "futures."

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SECRET AND PERSONAL



18

JS

cc HO  
FO  
MOD  
DIO

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

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PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A04131 of 30 January about the Panorama programme on the Intelligence Services and she has taken note of the present position.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Halliday (Home Office), Mr. Walden (FCO), Mr. Norbury (MOD) and Mr. Harrington (Northern Ireland Office).

C. A. WHITMORE

2 February 1981

SECRET AND PERSONAL

9/8





10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A04130 of 30 January 1981 about the proposed Panorama programme on the Intelligence Services.

She does not want a copy of your minute A04131 of 30 January 1981 to go to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Paymaster General at this stage.

The Prime Minister has also seen your minute of 31 January about the line she might take if the question of the programme came up during her interview with Mr. Brian Walden. She was glad to have your advice.

C. A. WHITMORE

2 February 1981



PRIME MINISTER

*Seen by the Prime Minister.*

*RM*

*2 ii*

Panorama Programme on Intelligence and Security

I do not suppose that Brian Walden will raise this subject with you; but in case he does, I thought that I should let you have this advance notice of the way in which I should like to suggest that you deal with any questions about this in the House of Commons on Tuesday: I see that Mr. Winnick has said that he intends to raise the matter.

The Press have been after the No. 10 Press Office and after the BBC. Bernard Ingham has said, I understand, that we never comment on intelligence and security matters. Sir Ian Trethowan has told the Press that no-one (from the Government) has seen the film, and that there has been no pressure from the Government on the BBC. In the stories that I have seen the main attack is on him; and he is content to take it. He is expecting to have something of a showdown with his editors next week.

If you are questioned, I think that the line for you to take might be as follows:

"In July we learned that the BBC were approaching a number of people concerned with security matters to give interviews for a proposed Panorama programme on intelligence and security. The BBC were told that, in view of the risks to national security inherent in such a programme, people in Government service would be instructed not to give interviews or co-operate with those making the programme. But the BBC has, under its Charter, complete editorial freedom, and it was, and is, entirely within the responsibility of the BBC to decide whether to show such a programme and what to put in it."

I think that this is a line on which you could stand, and I hope that you will be able to avoid being drawn further into the subject than this. We should not, for instance, wish to be drawn on the channels by which or the levels at which the Government communicated with the BBC on these matters.

/If you are



If you are asked to say whether the BBC were asked to pay regard to D-notices, you would say that there was no need for that: the BBC is represented (by the Director of News and Current Affairs, Mr. Richard Francis) on the Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee which is responsible for D-notices and can be assumed to be fully aware of their contents.

Robert Armstrong

31 January 1981



TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

16

Ref. A04130

COPY NO 1 OF 3 COPIES

MR WHITMORE

--- I attach a minute to the Prime Minister reporting the latest developments on the proposed Panorama programme on the Intelligence Services.

2. It is for consideration whether a copy of this minute should be sent to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Paymaster General. He was of course involved in the earlier stages of the affair while he was Secretary of State for Defence; and this programme, if and when it comes out, could have Parliamentary consequences.

Prime Minister.

You discussed this briefly with Sir Robert Armstrong this morning.

I do not like the idea of giving Mr Pye a copy of this minute. His office is not geared to handling papers about intelligence and security matters.

30 January 1981

Do you agree?

Yes  
No

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL



Ref. A04131

PRIME MINISTER

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Panorama Programme on the Intelligence Services

When you last discussed this with your colleagues on 1 October 1980, I was asked to continue to keep the matter under close review and bring further developments to the attention of Ministers.

2. Sir Ian Trethowan at first thought that, when the production team had put their material together and made a film, he should see the film, together with one or two members of the editorial and production teams and with Mr Sheldon (legal adviser to the Security Service). Later on he decided that that would be too difficult, since the role of Mr Sheldon would be liable to leak. Sir Ian decided that he and Mr Sheldon should watch the film privately together, and that thereafter, having heard Mr Sheldon's comments, he should take his own responsibility for deciding whether certain portions of the programme should be omitted. I was consulted as to whether Mr Sheldon should go along with this, and after consulting the appropriate colleagues I agreed that he should, on the understanding that it was clearly understood that he would be in no way giving clearance for the programme but would be providing Sir Ian Trethowan with specialist advice on which to make editorial judgements. It must be clearly understood, I said, that the fact that Mr Sheldon had seen and commented on the material would not be taken as restraining Ministers from saying publicly, if they had ~~the mind~~ to do so, that the programme was irresponsible and should not have been produced.

3. The material which Mr Sheldon eventually saw on 13 January ran for 100 minutes. It opened with a statement by Mr Jonathan Aitken supporting the need for greater accountability. Dr David Owen was shown stating in an interview that the convention that MI6 did not exist was a farce, though it had the marginal advantage that one did not need to consider what could be said about that organisation. The programme then dealt with the four agencies (MI5, MI6, Special Branch and GCHQ) in that order. There were photographs of premises and names and photographs of people (including the Director General of the Security Service, the Director General of the SIS, the Intelligence Co-ordinator



and the Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Home Office). There was a discussion of the chain of responsibility from the Director General of the Security Service to the Home Secretary. There were some comments on the Blunt case. Mr Merlyn Rees was quoted a number of times, but nothing of what he said contained anything particularly damaging and most of it would be regarded as reassuring. There was a section about the Security Service's use of Special Branch in making arrests, etc. for them. There was an interview with the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall emphasising that there was no national Special Branch and that all Special Branches were directly answerable to their own Chief Constables. There was a statement by Mr Robin Cook MP about the need for greater accountability and the inadequacy of the present practice under which the Home Secretary regularly refused to answer his questions. Mr Merlyn Rees took the line that people would have to trust Ministers.

4. When it came to MI6 and GCHQ, there were interviews with people said to work for MI6. The Service was said to be accountable to the Foreign Secretary with access to the Prime Minister. There were references to the Wynne case and to the Philby and Burgess cases. There was a brief reference to the Christine Keeler affair and to the Littlejohn affair.

5. There was a statement by Jonathan Aitken referring to a plan to assassinate Nasser. Dr David Owen was recorded as saying that during his time as Foreign Secretary it was not the policy of MI6 to engage in assassination.

6. A former member of the CIA was reported as saying that the CIA used MI6 to plant stories in areas which they could not reach and referred to the use of journalists through Reuters for intelligence purposes. Mr Gerald Long, General Manager of Reuters, stated that all intelligence officers were professional liars and no reliance should be placed on any allegations made by them. Another former CIA officer, who was a member of President-elect Reagan's entourage, supported the manipulation of news and said that it would only be done by Americans in this country with the knowledge of British Intelligence. This officer was asked about the consequences for the UK/USA relationship of the election of a Labour Government under left-wing domination. He stated that military co-operation and intelligence exchanges would be a casualty of this.



7. A number of interviews in America were shown, including Senator Huddleston, Mr William Colby and Mr Richard Helms. All spoke in a complimentary way about British Intelligence and Mr Richard Helms was emphatic that no changes were needed on the ground that "you do not fix something that is not broken".

8. Finally, there was a further interview with Dr David Owen in which he expressed some anxiety about the responsibilities carried by the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and Home Secretary and suggested that there might be merit in establishing a small group of Privy Counsellors who could question those Ministers in order to satisfy themselves that there was full democratic accountability.

9. The film lasted 100 minutes and was presumably intended to cover two Panorama programmes. Mr Sheldon made a number of comments immediately after seeing the film and some further comments after consulting the departments and agencies concerned.

10. Sir Ian Trethowan has now put the programme in the hands of Mr Richard Francis, Director of News and Current Affairs (and a member of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee), who has been asked to reduce it to a 50 minute programme, taking account of the various comments made and deletions suggested by Sir Ian Trethowan (following Mr Sheldon's comments). If those comments are all faithfully followed, the result should be a reasonably balanced programme from which most of the material to which we would have strong objection had been deleted.

11. Mr Sheldon has in my judgement done a very good job with Sir Ian Trethowan, and will certainly have significantly limited the damage caused by the programme. We cannot be sure that all the comments will be followed: there is some reason to think that Sir Ian Trethowan and Mr Francis may have quite a battle on their hands inside the BBC, and we can expect to hear echoes of this in the press. But I do not think there is any more we can do, short of an outright veto; and it remains my view (as I said in my minute of 24 September 1980) that that cure would be worse than the disease.

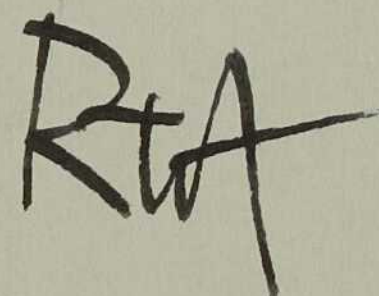
12.



SECRET AND PERSONAL

12. I attach a copy of a piece in today's Guardian about this programme. This was to be expected, and is as little damaging as we could hope: the spotlight is very much on Sir Ian Trethowan. It suggests (I do not know whether correctly) that the programme has been dropped. If so, I fear that attempts may be made to get it, or parts of it, out by other means (e.g. on the ITV network, or on some other BBC programme such as Newsnight). I am suggesting to the Home Office that they should warn the Independent Broadcasting Authority to keep their eyes open for this possibility.

13. I am sending copies of this minute to the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.



Robert Armstrong

30th January 1981



# Film dropped after Trethowan intervenes

By David Leigh

Large portions of a special edition of Panorama about the security services have been suppressed on the intervention of the BBC director-general, Sir Ian Trethowan. The film, although approved by senior BBC executives, will not now be shown.

Sir Ian took an unusual step two weeks ago which has puzzled BBC staff. He ordered a video cassette to be made of the 100-minute film, along with the transcript, which he took away for 15 days.

He then ordered portions to be struck out which BBC executives describe as covering 50-75 per cent of the material.

This included a sequence 'describing how the Special Branch passed false information'.

ation to a women's employer; and another sequence in which a former agent claimed to have arranged hundreds of illegal telephone taps for M16—an activity which the Government denies takes place.

Another excised passage consisted of an interview with a named former MI5 agent, Anthony Motion.

The programme, called M15/M16 — the need to know, also covers claims of M15 involvement in the downfall of Lord Lambton, whose activities with prostitutes were made known to the News of the World.

It deals with the Profumo affair, another ministerial sex scandal; MI6 recruitment of criminals in the Littlejohn affair; and MI6 plots to liqui-

date Prime Minister Mossadeq  
of Iran and Colonel Nasser in  
Egypt.

There were interviews with Mr Merlyn Rees, the former Home Secretary who was in charge of domestic M15 phone-tapping, David Owen, former Foreign Secretary, and other MPs.

The Special Branch episode described how inaccurate political information was collected about a young woman, and subsequently made available to her employer. It said that Scotland Yard subsequently apologised.

The interviewee who discussed phone-taps said he had conducted "500 black bag jobs"—illegal phone taps subcontracted by MI6 while ministers assured Parliament no such thing occurred.

The Panorama programme has been made openly. Many Fleet Street writers and specialists were consulted during its research, and Sir Arthur Banks and Sir Howard Smith, Callaghan appointees to head M16 and M15 were notified.

BBC staff believe that Mrs Thatcher expressed disquiet about the programme as long ago as last summer, and at one point the programme-makers received a directive from Sir Ian Trethowan which made it difficult to continue the programme: he banned them from contacting any agent or former agent of the security services.

The final programme was approved, before Sir Ian's intervention, by the then head of BBC-1, Mr Bill Cotton, and the head of current affairs, Mr

Dick Francis, who is also a member of the Whitehall-Fleet Street D-Notice Committee, which exists to protect national security.

The BBC last night denied that Sir Ian had shown the cassette to anyone in the Government. It said the status of the programme was still uncertain and the alterations presented by Sir Ian were "suggestions" because he was editor-in-chief concerned with such a sensitive matter.

The Prime Minister's office declined to comment last night on whether consultations had taken place either between the BBC and Mrs Thatcher, or officials of the BBC and officials of the security services. The security services themselves do not admit that they have any official existence.



*Security*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

Panorama Programme on the Intelligence  
Services

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A03194 of 8 October 1980 about your conversation with Lord Carr about the Panorama Programme on the Intelligence Services.

She was glad to learn that Lord Carr had decided to decline the invitation to appear on the Programme.

CLIVE WHITMORE

13 October 1980

*CS*



PERSONAL CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A03194

MR. WHITMORE

Prime Minister

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Good  
mt

Panorama Programme on the Intelligence Services

I spoke to Lord Carr this afternoon.

2. I said that we had known for some time that the Panorama team were preparing a programme on the intelligence services. I noted that Mr. Bolton's letter to him had suggested that the programme would deal with the issue of accountability, but it would obviously be difficult for a television programme to deal with that issue without also dealing with the activities being accounted for, and the reports which we had about the team's inquiries suggested that they had gone wider than the simple issue of accountability.

3. I told Lord Carr that the programmes were not welcome to the Government, and that we had made it clear to the BBC that the Government would not support or co-operate in their preparation. We had advised retired civil servants who had been approached that they should not take part in the programmes. We should certainly not wish to ask, advise or encourage Lord Carr to accept the invitation, if he was disposed not to do so. He should, however, know that Panorama had approached Mr. Rees similarly, that he had accepted the invitation, and that he had given the Panorama team a filmed interview lasting for two hours.

4. Lord Carr said that he would decline the invitation. I made it clear that we should be absolutely content with his decision.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

8th October, 1980

PERSONAL CONFIDENTIAL



SECRET AND PERSONAL



Security. 14

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

You saw the Prime Minister this afternoon to seek decisions on two fresh developments on the Panorama programme on the intelligence services.

First, you said that Sir Ian Trethowan had asked that Mr. Tom Mangold, the producer of the programme, should be given the same kind of briefing as he had had and that he had suggested that this might be done by Mr. Sheldon and Sir Dick White.

Second, the Editor of Panorama had written to Lord Carr inviting him to take part in the programme. Lord Carr had been in touch with you to say that while he did not particularly wish to appear, he was ready to do so if the Government thought that it would be helpful. In that event he would like some briefing in order to refresh his memory. You said that you thought that there was something to be said for not discouraging Lord Carr from accepting the invitation partly because he might provide a useful counter-balance to the interview which Mr. Merlyn Rees had already given and also because if he refused to appear, the producers might turn to Lord Butler who was likely to be a good deal less reliable in any contribution he made than Lord Carr. Whatever advice we offered Lord Carr, we would have to make it clear to him that Ministers much preferred that the programme should not be shown at all, that we were attempting to distance ourselves from it as much as possible and that if it was shown, we might wish to attack the BBC publicly for broadcasting it.

/The Prime Minister

SECRET AND PERSONAL

CS



SECRET

AND PERSONAL

- 2 -

The Prime Minister said that she was content for Mr. Sheldon to brief Mr. Mangold but she did not think that Sir Dick White should be involved.

She was strongly opposed to Lord Carr appearing in the programme for if he did so, he would lend it authority and credibility. Yet we did not know what the rest of the programme would contain. Lord Carr should be told that Ministers were dismayed at the proposed programme and had done all they could to discourage it because it was contrary to the national interest. He should be advised not to take part in it.

*AW.*

7 October 1980

SECRET

AND PERSONAL

CS



TOP SECRET, PERSONAL

R.H. 13



cc:- FCO CO  
MOD NIO

COPY NO 6 OF 6 COPIES

10 DOWNING STREET

*cc Master Set*

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

2 October, 1980

Panorama Programme on the Intelligence

Services

The Prime Minister met the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Sir Robert Armstrong yesterday evening to discuss Sir Robert Armstrong's minute A03077 of 24 September reporting the latest position on the BBC Panorama programme on the Intelligence Services.

The Prime Minister said that she was very anxious to protect the Intelligence Services and she feared the purpose of those who were making the programme was to discredit those Services. The question to be decided was whether any further steps beyond the approaches which Sir Robert Armstrong had already made to Sir Ian Trethowan could be taken in order to safeguard the Services. If the programme was eventually shown, it would be difficult for Ministers to criticise the BBC as being totally irresponsible in transmitting it, if they could have prevented its broadcast but had done nothing to do so. These considerations pointed to writing to Sir Ian Trethowan on the lines set out in Sir Robert Armstrong's minute of 24 September warning him that to show the programme would be contrary to the national interest and even to being ready to use the veto. On the other hand, these courses had their own dangers, as Sir Robert Armstrong had explained in his minute.

The Home Secretary said that the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC had raised the matter of the programme with him earlier in the week. He believed, in the light of what Mr Howard had said, that Sir Robert Armstrong's approaches to Sir Ian Trethowan had had more effect than perhaps we had believed. The BBC appeared to be fully seized of all the arguments against the programme which had been put to them. Sir Ian Trethowan would see the programme once it was produced to decide whether it should be shown and if so, in what form. Mr Howard had also told him that Sir Ian Trethowan had met the Heads of both MI5 and MI6 and had claimed, surprisingly, that both had been comparatively relaxed about the programme.

TOP SECRET, PERSONAL

/The Home Secretary

GB.



- 2 -

The Home Secretary continued that he was inclined to think that further pressure on the BBC, reinforcing that which Sir Robert Armstrong had already applied, might well be counter-productive now. He saw the attractions of using the veto but to do so would jeopardise the Government's general relationship with the BBC. Moreover, the press would be wholly opposed to the use of the veto, and the Government might face considerable criticism from its own supporters. It might be worth paying all these prices if the veto would effectively prevent the damage the programme would do. But he did not believe that this would be the case, for those preparing the programme would see that its essential contents were leaked, and this would lead to as much continuing parliamentary and press interest in the Intelligence Services as if the programme had been transmitted in its original form.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary said that he would be ready to agree to the use of the veto but for the near certainty that the programme would be leaked. If the programme was shown and it did considerable damage to the Intelligence Services, the Government would be able to mount a telling attack on the BBC, showing that the Corporation had put Ministers in an impossible position where the threat of leaks had ruled out any possibility of using the veto.

Sir Robert Armstrong said that since the conversation between the Home Secretary and Mr Howard, Sir Ian Trethowan had seen Mr Sheldon and told him, amongst other things, that the prime issue about the programme was beginning to become one of whether the BBC ought to resist Government pressure. He had claimed that Mr Howard shared this view of the situation.

The Prime Minister said that she feared that the BBC would make minor changes in the programme to convince themselves that they were doing nothing which would seriously damage the Intelligence Services and that they would then go ahead and show it, arguing that they should do so in the interests of freedom of information. Nonetheless, the meeting agreed that there was no more that could be done at present to dissuade them from proceeding with the programme. Sir Robert Armstrong should continue to keep the matter under close review and bring further developments to their attention as necessary.

I am sending copies of this letter to George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence), Roy Harrington (Northern Ireland Office) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

C.A. WHITMORE

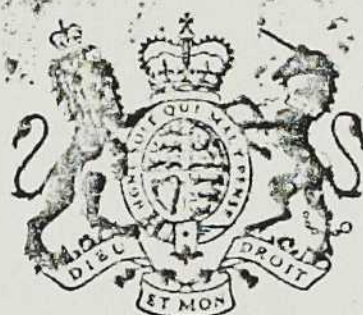
John F Halliday, Esq  
Home Office



TOP SECRET

PERSONAL

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Security



COPY NO. 2 OF 2 COPIES

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

PANORAMA PROGRAMME ON THE  
INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

The Prime Minister has seen your minute A03077 of 24 September 1980 reporting where we have got to on the Panorama programme on the intelligence services.

She agrees with your suggestion that she should discuss the matter again with the Ministers concerned, and we will be in touch with their offices and yours to arrange a time.

RAW.

29 September 1980

TOP SECRET

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Q



TOP SECRET

11

PRIME MINISTER

Our attempts to persuade the BBC to drop the Panorama programme on the intelligence services are not going well, and the likelihood at the moment is that they will go ahead and show it.

The courses open to us are:-

- (i) to continue our present oral efforts at persuasion;
- (ii) to toughen those efforts with a warning letter but still to leave the decision whether to screen the film to the BBC;
- (iii) to decide to use the veto against the programme and, without revealing that decision initially, to put pressure on the BBC accordingly.

Sir Robert Armstrong prefers course (i) as the least unsatisfactory choice of three evils.

He suggests that you might want to discuss the matter with the Ministers concerned. Agree to do so?

Yes  
KWW. MB.

26 September 1980

TOP SECRET



Ref. A03077

Copy No. 1 of 7 Copies

PRIME MINISTER

Panorama Programme on the Intelligence Services

I last reported to you on this in my minutes of 29th July and 8th August (A02749 and A02844).

2. I saw Sir Ian Trethowan again on 18th September. What happened at that meeting is recorded in a letter, a copy of which is attached to this minute.

3. The position is not very satisfactory. The Panorama team have been pursuing their inquiries extensively, particularly overseas. All the reports suggest that their approach is not balanced but starts from the basis of a prejudice against the services, and looks for material which will justify and support that prejudice. Following my first meeting with him, Sir Ian Trethowan instructed the team not to interview past or present members of MI5 or MI6 in London; but he has not so far been monitoring their activities or their product (though he was to be seeking a preliminary account of the proposed contents of the programme from the producer this week). He has, however, said that he will himself see the programme before it goes out; that the BBC would put out nothing that was not authoritative and balanced; that the BBC will consider the material by reference to the 'D' Notices (copies of the relevant 'D' Notices 10 and 11 are attached); and that he is prepared to excise material or even prohibit the showing of the programme if he thinks it necessary to do so.

4. Sir Ian Trethowan at one stage floated the idea of consulting (or even showing the film to) the Chairman of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee (the "'D' Notice Committee"). I doubt whether it would be appropriate to consult the Chairman; but it would be perfectly reasonable for him to consult the Secretary of the Committee (who might then be able to give us an idea of how damaging the programme might be), and I have encouraged Sir Ian Trethowan to keep this possibility well in mind.



5. My judgment is that we have now taken this as far as we can within the framework of what was agreed at your meeting on 25th July. We can keep at Sir Ian Trethowan (though we are near if not at the point when further pressure of that kind will be counter-productive). But the likelihood is that a programme or programmes will go ahead and be shown; and that they will contain material which it would be preferable should not be shown.

6. The risk has always been that we shall have something of a wide-ranging expose which, by diminishing the protection which secrecy confers on them, damages the morale of members of the intelligence services and diminishes their capacity to do their job effectively and their credibility in the eyes of those to whom they need to be credible. My concern in talking to Sir Ian Trethowan has been to leave him in no doubt of that risk. We cannot be sure what the effects on the programme will be; but it is possible that the result will be a programme which is uncomfortable but not too seriously damaging, the results of which might well be more tolerable than intensifying the pressure.

7. If we were to intensify the pressure - by writing to Sir Ian Trethowan - there are broadly two degrees of pressure open to us:

- (1) We could write to the effect that the Government was aware of the proposal for a Panorama programme on the intelligence services and of the activities of the team, that there were 'D' Notices relating to these services, and that in the interests of national security the Government trusted that the BBC would have full regard to those 'D' Notices in deciding what should be shown.
- (2) We could write to the effect that the Government was aware of the proposal for a Panorama programme on the intelligence services and of the activities of the team, that there were 'D' Notices relating to these services, that this was a field in which an inadvertent breach of the 'D' Notices could have serious consequences for national security, and that the Government would therefore be grateful if arrangements could be made for the Government to see a detailed synopsis of the contents of the programme (or the script of the programme, or the film itself) in advance, so as to be able to advise the BBC if there was material in it whose publication would be prejudicial to national security.



8. A letter on the lines of (1) would put into writing the sort of points I have been putting to Sir Ian Trethowan, but it would leave responsibility with the BBC. The only advantage would be that, if the programme shown was in the event irresponsible, the Government would be able to say not only that it was irresponsible but also that the BBC had been warned in writing: the letter could be drafted with a view to eventual publication if need be. The disadvantage would be that it would not in practice add anything to what had been said; it would no doubt annoy Sir Ian Trethowan and other members of the BBC (and thus risk being counter-productive); and it could be leaked as evidence that the Government were bringing pressure to bear on the BBC. As we should in any case be able to state that the Director General had been fully warned about the possible risks and consequences, I think that the disadvantages of this course outweigh the advantages.

9. In a letter on the lines of (2), the iron fist in the velvet glove would be the request that the Government should be shown a synopsis (or script or film) in advance. Such a request would, I believe, be unprecedented. The BBC would, of course, want to avoid the risk of exposing themselves to charges of irresponsibility; but even so I think that the request would be refused, on the ground that it was an attempt at censorship. It might well be suspected of being the precursor to using the veto; and the BBC might well publicise it in the hope of making it more difficult for the Government to use the veto. If the request was made and refused, the chances of voluntary co-operation would be impaired, and the Government would in effect have been defied, and its bluff called. It would then be necessary to consider whether to exercise the veto, with all that that implies. I believe that this is a course on which we should not embark unless we are prepared to use the veto.

10. As to that, it might be argued that, if ever there was a case in which the use of the veto was justifiable on its merits, a case like this, where interests of national security are at stake, would be such a one. But it has to be accepted that the use of the veto would have little support in Parliament and none in the media, and there would be a political row in which the Government would have few



allies; relations between the Government and the BBC would be profoundly affected; and the use of the veto and the consequences that would flow from that could well do the services themselves more damage than the programme would. An explicit threat to use the veto would have many of the same disadvantages. I remain of the view that the cure would be worse than the disease.

11. No course is satisfactory, but I think that the least unsatisfactory is to continue with the course already agreed upon: to do whatever is still possible without risking being counter-productive with Sir Ian Trethowan, the Chairman of the Governors and perhaps one or two other Governors, to encourage and induce the BBC to act responsibly; but not to write any letters and not to do anything which would inhibit the Government from finding fault publicly with the BBC, if in the event it acts irresponsibly.

12. I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Defence and Northern Ireland; you may want to discuss the matter with them again.

REA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

24th September, 1980



TOP SECRET

PERSONAL

Photocopy No. 1 of  
Copy No. 2 of 8 Copies

22nd September, 1980

Ref. A03045

I had a further word with Ian Trethowan on 18th September about the Panorama programme on the intelligence services.

He said that he had not been able to get an up-to-date report on where matters stood, as the editor of Panorama was in Stuttgart. He expected to be talking to the producer of the programme early this week; he would get from him an account of what they had been doing, their ideas for the content of the programme, and what they were going to do next. He reiterated that nothing would be shown before the end of October. He said that he would be seeing the material himself, and that he would be instructing the team to excise material which offended against D Notices. Indeed, he still did not exclude the possibility of ruling that the programme should not go out at all.

I said that recent reports of the activities of the team had done nothing to diminish our own apprehensions about the possible damage that the programme might do. It appeared that the team were calling upon and trying to interview heads of corresponding services in other countries, seeking material not only about the accountability of those services but also about the functions and activities of our own services in this country. These inquiries overseas were giving rise to some concern in overseas services about the effect of the programme on our services. The tone of the inquiries suggested that those concerned were not approaching the subject with an open mind or balanced outlook, but with a prejudice against the services. They must be accumulating a considerable amount of material, which might be used elsewhere even if it was not used by the BBC.

It was clear that Ian Trethowan knew very little about recent activities of the team. He said that in July he had given an instruction that nothing was to be shown before the end of October, and that they were not to seek further to interview past and present members of MI5 or MI6 in London. He knew that they were likely to visit the United States to talk to members of the CIA; he had not

/expected

Sir Brian Cubbon, KCB

TOP SECRET

PERSONAL



TOP SECRET

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expected them to go to Hong Kong, and he did not know what they were doing there. He said that film made by or for the BBC would not be available for use outside, though he obviously could not prevent "leaks" of written or oral communications. I said that in Hong Kong they were no doubt pursuing the allegations made by Mr. John Kane about the GCHQ station there. I hoped that it would not be argued that, because written material and photographs relating to that station had been published in Campbell's articles in the New Statesman, the BBC must be free to publish whatever they liked. This was D Notice country; and in the circumstances of this case the argument that the BBC should be able to do whatever the New Statesman might have done could not be accepted at its simple face value. Ian Trethowan acknowledged that this was a point which needed careful consideration.

Ian Trethowan referred to his suggestion that the film might be shown to the Chairman of the D Notice Committee. I said that I doubted whether that would be appropriate, though it might well be appropriate for them to consult the Secretary of the D Notice Committee. Ian Trethowan said that he would consider this; but he said that Dick Francis was a member of the D Notice Committee, and he thought that he and Dick Francis between them should be able to make up their minds what did and did not offend against D Notices.

Ian Trethowan said that they had two hours of interview with Mr. Merlyn Rees. All he told me about the content of that was that Mr. Rees had said that there should be more accountability.

I said that if, when he came to look at the material, he decided that some of it should be taken out, there was a risk that that would lead to protests within the BBC and some leakage outside it. This seemed inevitable, given that his decisions could not be taken until he saw the programme: it was a risk that had to be run, and I hoped that it would not affect his judgment about what should or should not come out on grounds of national security. He assured me that it would not do so; he was resigned to, and not affected by, the prospect of articles in Time Out and the Guardian.

He was obviously slightly inclined to feel that we were protesting a little too much. He said, for instance, that some of the points that had been put to him by Bernard Sheldon appeared on examination to be without substance. One of the difficulties was that his contact with Bernard Sheldon was private, and he was unable to use the information quoted to him. His task would be easier, in dealing with his own people, if he were able to make more use of some of the specific points which had been put to him.

I said that I should be available if he wanted to be in touch again, after he had talked to the producer of the programme.

I am sending copies of this letter to Michael Palliser, Frank Cooper, Ken Stowe, Howard Smith, 'C' and Brian Tovey.

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

TOP SECRET

PERSONAL



DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

'D' NOTICE NO 10

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

This Notice should be read in conjunction with 'D' Notice No 1.

2. The broad functions of the Security Service and the Secret Service (often referred to as MI5 and MI6) are of course widely known. The Security Service is responsible for countering threats to the Realm arising from espionage, subversion and sabotage and the Secret Service exists to provide HM Government with secret intelligence concerning foreign powers. Both Services must operate as far as possible in conditions of secrecy.
3. Attempts are made by foreign powers to plant stories in the British Press. A variation of this technique, which must be taken into account where the activities of foreign intelligence services are concerned, is the planting in an overseas newspaper or other publication of a piece of information about British Intelligence matters with an eye to stimulating the British Press not only to republish the story but also to expand on it.
4. You are requested not to publish anything about:
  - a. secret activities of the British intelligence or counter-intelligence services undertaken inside or outside the UK for the purposes of national security;
  - b. identities, whereabouts and tasks of persons of whatever status or rank who are or have been employed by either Service;
  - c. addresses and telephone numbers used by either Service;
  - d. organizational structures, communications networks, numerical strengths, secret methods and training techniques of either Service;
  - e. details of assistance given by the police forces in Security Service operations;
  - f. details of the manner in which well-known intelligence methods (eg telephone-tapping) are actually applied or of their targets and purposes where these concern national security. Reference in general terms to well-known intelligence methods is not precluded by this sub-paragraph;
  - g. technical advances by the British Services in relation to their intelligence and counter-intelligence methods whether the basic methods are well-known or not.

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

5. You are also requested to use extreme discretion in reporting any apparent disclosures of information published abroad purporting to come from members or former employees of either Service. If you are in any doubt please consult the Secretary.
6. You are also requested not to elaborate on any information which may be published abroad about British intelligence.
7. On all these limitations some relaxation may be possible: please consult the Secretary.



**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

**DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE**

**'D' NOTICE NO 11**

**CYPHERS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

This Notice should be read in conjunction with 'D' Notice No 1.

2. The object of this Notice is to draw attention to the need for careful handling of information about HMG's own communications arrangements and its interception of communications as a means of obtaining secret intelligence concerning foreign powers. Secure communications are essential for our defence and for our conduct of foreign affairs; publication of details about secure communications systems can assist potential enemies to penetrate them. Similarly, publication of any information about our interception arrangements tends to stimulate other countries into taking measures which could make the work of our security and intelligence services more difficult. In these matters many of the security interests of our allies are identical with our own.
3. You are requested not to publish anything about:
  - a. HM Government's codes and cyphers;
  - b. details of duties and numbers of employees in defence and diplomatic communications establishments (in personal identification the place of work and grade may be given; but this information should not be enlarged upon without first consulting the Secretary);
  - c. the nature and extent of interception by HMG of any form of communications, or of transmissions such as radar, for the purposes of national security: this includes the establishments and the personnel, methods and arrangements involved.
4. Bearing in mind the points in paragraph 2 above and the specific requests in paragraph 3, discussion of the subject in general terms is not precluded.
5. You are also requested to use extreme discretion in reporting any apparent disclosures of information published abroad purporting to come from individuals who are or were employed on British codes and cyphers or in interception activities. If you are in any doubt please consult the Secretary.
6. You are also requested not to elaborate on any information which may be published abroad about British codes and cyphers or interception activities.

Date of issue 16 August 1971

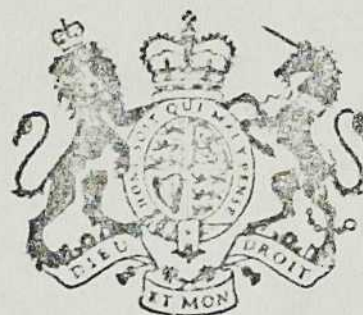
**PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**



TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

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Copy No. 6 of 6 copies

cc: J10  
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MOD  
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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

MR. WRIGHT

The Prime Minister has seen Sir Robert Armstrong's minute reference A20844 about the proposed BBC Panorama programme on the intelligence services.

She has commented that Sir Ian Trethowan's response is much as she would have expected, and that she hopes the new Chairman of the Governors would insist on seeing the programme before there is any question of its being broadcast.

I am sending copies of this minute to John Halliday (Home Office), George Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and Roy Harrington (Northern Ireland Office).

M. A. PATTISON

86

11 August 1980

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL



This is a copy. The original  
has been extracted and  
retained under S.3(4).

being as well as  
expected.

TOP SECRET

AND PERSONAL

Minister Security  
Content to leave matters  
as reported, without  
asking Home Sec to  
veto the programme?

Ref. A02844

Copy No. 1 of 14 Copies

PRIME MINISTER

1 Lord George Howard

will insist on seeing the

programme before vetting any further

BBC Panorama Programme on the Intelligence Services

of its being broadcast.

I have now had a further talk with Sir Ian Trethowan.

2. Sir Ian Trethowan said that he was acutely conscious of the risk that the BBC might be, or be thought to be, exploited by Mr. Duncan Campbell and others of that kind, and that the BBC was determined to avoid that risk. On the other hand, since we last spoke, he had been strengthened in his opinion that it would be difficult to argue that accountability for the intelligence services was not a matter of legitimate public interest. He pointed out that Mr. Robin Cook's Bill, which had now been published for some time, was backed not only by left-wing Members of Parliament but also by one or two Government backbenchers, including Mr. Jonathan Aitken. He also said that the Panorama team had a number of interviews recorded in the United States and other foreign countries with such people as Mr. Richard Helms. Many of these interviews drew attention to the damage which had been done to the intelligence services in the United States and expressed the view that we had managed our affairs in these respects much better. The publication of such interviews would not be damaging to the interests of the services.

3. Sir Ian Trethowan said that he had therefore agreed that the Panorama team should continue to pursue its activities on the foreign side and on the Parliamentary side - by which I take him to mean the question of accountability. On the other hand he had told them that they were not to pursue their attempts to get material from present or former members of the intelligence services \*

4. I understand that the new Chairman of the BBC, Mr. George Howard, has also had a word with the Home Secretary on these matters. The reports which I have heard of that are consistent with what Sir Ian Trethowan said to me.

\*~\* Passage deleted and retained  
under Section 3(4).

-1-

W. Dayland, 8.9.11

TOP SECRET

AND PERSONAL



**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL

I understand that Mr. Howard also told the Home Secretary that he had asked Sir Ian Trethowan to exercise personal responsibility and oversight over this programme, and to make sure that he himself saw and vetted the material before the programme was put out.

5. I think that we have now done as much as we can to limit the damage that is liable to ensue from a BBC Panorama programme on the intelligence services. It is still possible that Sir Ian Trethowan may decide at the end of the day that there should be no programme; but I am afraid that I do not think that that is very likely.

6. If we wanted to make sure that the programme would not take place, the Home Secretary would have to use his power of veto. We have to balance the damage that might be caused by the showing of the programme against the damage that would be caused by using the veto to prevent it. Even solely in terms of damage to the intelligence services, I think that the effects of using the veto might be more damaging - and that is the view of the Heads of the services themselves. There are also wider considerations of censorship: the veto has never been used to ban the showing of a particular programme to which the Government had objections, and its use, even to protect the intelligence services, would undoubtedly lead to a major political row.

7. There will no doubt be other opportunities nearer the time to reconsider this, but I judge that for the time being we have taken things as far as we can.

8. I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Defence and Northern Ireland.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

8th August, 1980

**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL



TOP SECRET  
AND PERSONAL



Security 7  
COPY 6 OF 6 COPIES

File Lb.

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

BBC PANORAMA: PROPOSED PROGRAMME ON  
INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A02749 of 29 July 1980 reporting your meeting with Sir Ian Trethowan about the proposed Panorama programme on the Intelligence Services.

The Prime Minister was grateful for this account. She commented:-

"The matter has been put to the BBC in no uncertain terms".

She looks forward to hearing further from you when Sir Ian Trethowan gets in touch with you again to let you have his considered response.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Halliday (Home Office), Mr. Walden (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Mr. Norbury (Ministry of Defence) and Mr. Harrington (Northern Ireland Office).

IC A. WHITMORE

4 August 1980

TOP SECRET  
AND PERSONAL



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AND PERSONAL

Ref. A02749

MR. WHITMORE

Prime Minister. 6

We await Sir Ian

Trethowan's considered  
response.

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BBC Panorama: Proposed Programme on Intelligence Services

I saw Sir Ian Trethowan this morning.

2. I said that I was speaking to him with the knowledge and approval of the Prime Minister.

3. I spoke on the lines of paragraph 13(a) of my minute of 21st July. I said that the activities of Duncan Campbell and those associated with him were doing the effectiveness of the intelligence services no good. The damage was containable so long as the activities were confined to the columns of the New Statesman, Time Out and other papers of that kind; but a BBC Panorama programme would reach a very large audience, and could run the risk of very much greater damage to the effectiveness of the services. That of course was what Campbell and his associates were aiming at. I said that I recognised that there would be some aspects of the matter - particularly accountability - which could be regarded as matters of legitimate public interest; but, even if the programme was confined to that, it would not be possible for any present or former member of the intelligence services or of the public service to take any part, and I doubted whether present Ministers could do so either. It seemed to me that in the circumstances it would be very difficult to produce a balanced programme. I said that all that I had heard about the activities of the Panorama team preparing the programme suggested that they were aiming for something going much wider than accountability, and looking at the functions and operation of the intelligence services, and I instanced a number of examples of the activities of Tom Mangold and his team to illustrate this point. I felt bound to draw Sir Ian Trethowan's attention to this, and to the risks it entailed for the work of the intelligence services.

4. Sir Ian Trethowan said that the BBC would produce nothing that was not authoritative and balanced. He recognised, and the Panorama team now recognised, that there was no possibility of co-operation from within the services

**TOP SECRET**

AND PERSONAL



**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL

or within the public service on the functions and operations of the intelligence services, and that it would not therefore be possible to produce a programme on that subject which would be authoritative and balanced. I should rest assured that nothing on those lines would be shown. It was already clear and accepted that there would not be two programmes. There remained the question of accountability. This was a matter which was being pursued by a Member of Parliament (Mr. Robert Cook), who was proposing to introduce a Bill. It was difficult to argue that this was not a matter of public interest which could be presented on the BBC. He recognised the difficulties which prevented anybody from inside the services or Government from taking part, but he hoped that it would be possible to provide a measure of balance by inviting former Ministers to take part: he referred to Mr. Merlyn Rees, Lord Carr, Lord Butler and "former Prime Ministers, but not Sir Harold Wilson".

5. I reiterated that the activities of the team, as I was hearing of them from a number of sources, were by no means consistent with a programme confined to the question of accountability, and were not merely disagreeable but in some cases positively discreditable. My fear was that the preparation of the programmes would go forward, that the Director General would find himself, near the time for broadcasting, with programmes on which there had been a considerable investment and which it would be difficult then to cancel and replace. Sir Ian Trethowan assured me that considerations of cost would not prevent him from disallowing a programme which in his view ought not to be shown, as he had done on previous occasions. I said that this seemed a cavalier approach to costs from an institution which was complaining of being very short of money.

6. I then reverted to the question of accountability. I said that I could understand why he might think that it was difficult to object to a programme confined to that issue. But he should have regard to the motives of those who were promoting the interest in this subject. It was not a matter of widespread public interest, and the arrangements for accountability, both on expenditure and on activities, were good. Parliament had always accepted that

**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL



**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL

parliamentary control in these areas was entrusted to Ministers, and there were no indications of general dissatisfaction with that position. Mr. Cook was exploiting this issue as a vehicle for promoting the campaign, in which he was associated with Duncan Campbell, to discredit the intelligence services and damage their effectiveness. The BBC had to consider very seriously whether it should lend its authority to this campaign. The BBC should guard against the possibility that it was being exploited by Mr. Campbell and others. This did not mean that I regarded Tom Mangold as anything other than an over-enthusiastic investigative journalist, though there were contacts between Tom Mangold and Campbell and his associates which were worrying, and it was possible that Mangold might be being unconsciously exploited. But that was not the point: the point for the Director General was whether the BBC should lend its authority, even by putting out a programme on accountability, to a campaign whose motivation was to discredit and damage the intelligence services.

7. Sir Ian Trethowan promised to reflect on what I had said and to be in touch again later.

8. Sir Ian Trethowan said that he had informed the new Chairman of the BBC about the preparation of this programme, and Mr. Howard had discussed the matter with the Panorama team in the course of a visit to Lime Grove. Sir Ian Trethowan did not tell me what Mr. Howard's view was.

9. I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Halliday (Home Office), Mr. Walden (FCO), Mr. Norbury (MOD) and Mr. Harrington (NIO).



(Robert Armstrong)

29th July, 1980

**TOP SECRET** AND PERSONAL



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AND PERSONAL

5



COPY NO. 6 OF 6 COPIES

10 DOWNING STREET

*Security*

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

BBC PANORAMA: PROPOSED PROGRAMME ON INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

The Prime Minister met the Home Secretary, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and you this morning to discuss the issues raised in your minutes AO2674 of 21 July 1980 and AO2712 of 24 July 1980.

It was agreed that you, acting on the Prime Minister's instructions, should see Sir Ian Trethowan in an attempt to persuade him that the Panorama programme should be dropped. In doing so, you should not say anything that might lead him to believe that the Government would not be ready to use its power of veto to prevent the transmission of the programme.

It was also agreed that while it was not desirable at this stage to make a direct approach to the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC, there would be advantage in the Home Secretary arranging for Sir Brian Cubbon to mention in a general way to Mr. George Howard, whom he was due to see for other reasons, that there were problems about the Panorama programme, in the hope that Mr. Howard would then make his own enquiries within the BBC.

The Prime Minister said that if Sir Robert Armstrong's approach to Sir Ian Trethowan was unsuccessful, Ministers would need to meet again to decide whether to use their veto.

I am sending copies of this minute to Mr. Halliday (Home Office), Mr. Walden (FCO), Mr. Norbury (MOD) and Mr. Harrington (NIO).

*ARM*

25 July 1980

TOP SECRET

AND PERSONAL



TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTERBBC Panorama: Proposed Programme on  
Intelligence Services

I sent you a minute about this (A02674) on 21st July. I was able to discuss that minute with Permanent Secretaries from the Home Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Northern Ireland Office and the Heads of the three Agencies concerned yesterday afternoon.

2. The conclusions can be summarised as follows:-

- (i) If it is possible by the exercise of sweet reason to persuade the BBC to drop the idea of the programme completely, that would be much the best outcome.
- (ii) The Heads of the Agencies are doubtful whether it would be prudent actually to use the power of veto to prevent the programme: they fear that the resulting row, with all the attention which it would focus on the intelligence services in the media, could do the intelligence services more damage than a Panorama programme limited to whatever extent it might be possible to limit it. They agree that in discussion with the BBC at this stage the possibility that the veto might be used should not be foreclosed.
- (iii) If it is not possible to persuade the BBC to drop the programme, then as fall-back we should do our best to limit its scope and in particular to persuade the BBC to stop pursuing its inquiries into the functions and working of the intelligence services.
- (iv) A programme limited to accountability would in theory limit the damage, and that might have to be accepted, if that was as far as the BBC could be persuaded. But there was considerable scepticism at my meeting as to whether a worthwhile programme could be produced on that basis, or whether the BBC would in fact stick to the limitation.

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TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

(v) On the whole the meeting thought that the BBC should be approached from a higher level, though we were told that Sir Ian Trethowan had said that it was easier for him to act responsibly (as he saw it) because he was not being put under pressure by the Government.

(vi) If there was to be an approach, it should (for the reasons suggested in my minute) be from me, acting with your authority and on your instructions, to Sir Ian Trethowan. The Home Office should not be involved in it.

3. I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Defence and Northern Ireland.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

24th July, 1980

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL





10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister.

There will now be a  
further submission in due course  
from Sir Robert Armstrong  
reporting the conclusions of the  
meeting he held today. But  
I am putting the attached  
minutes to you again so that  
you are aware of the background.

THW

23rd



TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTERBBC Panorama: Proposed Programme on  
Intelligence Services

*I should like to  
discuss this briefly with  
WW. PC. I am afraid  
any programme being shown  
would be referred to  
the vet. Mr.*

At your meeting early in June on the Official Histories of Intelligence I mentioned that the Panorama team were engaged in preparing material for one or two programmes on the intelligence services. You thought that this might be a matter for the Home Secretary to take up with the Chairman of the Governors of the BBC. I sent Mr. Whitmore a minute on this on 18th June; he replied on 20th June.

2. Developments since then can be summarised as follows:-

- (a) There have been continuing contacts between the Legal Adviser to the Security Service (Mr. Bernard Sheldon) and the Director General of the BBC. The Director General's present view seems to be:-
- (i) he does not think he can reasonably prevent some programme on the accountability of the intelligence services; he recognises that this is not a matter on which present or past members of the Services should be asked to comment, and would hope to achieve balance by seeking the views of an appropriately experienced politician (he mentioned Mr. Merlyn Rees and Mr. William Deedes);
  - (ii) he understands the dangers of lending respectability to a campaign by Duncan Campbell, Robin Cook, Robert Cryer and others, and the possible need to expose their motives and associations;
  - (iii) he is minded to say that the programme cannot examine the functions and working of the Services.

Sir Ian Trethowan has told Mr. Sheldon that the fact that a good deal of money is being spent on research will not significantly affect the likelihood of any programme being transmitted. It would not in any event be transmitted before the autumn (it seems to be scheduled for October).

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- (b) The Panorama team, led by Tom Mangold, has approached a great many people for interviews or briefing for these programmes, including Sir Dick White, Sir Leonard Hooper, Sir Brooks Richards (all former Intelligence Co-ordinators), the Head of the FCO News Department, the Director General of the Security Service, the Head of the SIS, and the Director of Public Relations for the Army (for help in connection with Northern Ireland). It is also making inquiries in the United States, Australia and Western Germany about the accountability of the intelligence services in those countries.
- (c) In his approach to the FCO News Department, Tom Mangold asked for non-attributable briefing with a representative of the SIS. When this was refused, he said that we should not delude ourselves into believing that the team would be dissuaded from its intention of making a programme by lack of official briefing: such an attitude could not stop the films, but it would distort them, since it would give disproportionate space to partisan lobbies. He said that the team intended to explore the Anglo-American intelligence relationship; and intended to invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to be interviewed on the subject of accountability.
- (d) Panorama's interest in the subject clearly stems from the activities of Duncan Campbell. It is not clear whether Campbell is in any sense behind the idea of a Panorama programme. Panorama is believed to have approached one of Campbell's associates in connection with this programme; and Mangold has in the past worked with Steve Weissman, a collaborator of Agee and an associate of Campbell. Weissman is employed on a contract basis by Panorama, but is believed to have been given notice.

3. The Director General says that the commitment of money and effort to research does not significantly affect the likelihood of any programme being transmitted. None the less it must be assumed that, the further the preparation of the programmes progresses, the less likely it is that they will not in due course be shown, or that the contents can be significantly changed. These



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preparations will continue through what remains of the summer if no steps are taken to halt or curtail them. The question is whether the time has come for an approach to the BBC at a higher level than the Legal Adviser to the Security Service; and, if so, what that approach should be.

4. I am to discuss these issues in more detail with senior officials of the Departments and Agencies concerned on 23rd July. But time is running short - the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary goes to Latin America at the end of the week - and I thought that I should send you this preliminary minute, in case you might like to consult the other Ministers concerned immediately, or to express a preliminary view.

5. My own view, ahead of my meeting, is that the time has come to approach the BBC from a higher level. If the approach is to have any effect, it will have to be made either by or with the express authority of Ministers. It would be possible for you or the Home Secretary (or both) to summon the new Chairman of the Board of Governors. But I am doubtful about that for two reasons:-

- (i) If at this stage we go over Sir Ian Trethowan's head, we may forfeit the goodwill and readiness to co-operate with Mr. Sheldon that he has been showing.
- (ii) This would be the first brush between Ministers and the new Chairman, and he might feel it necessary to demonstrate that he was not the creature of the Government (or swayed by personal friendships with members of the Government).

I believe, therefore, that if there is to be an approach at this stage, it should be from me, acting with your authority and on your instructions, to Sir Ian Trethowan. That would have the additional advantage of keeping open the possibility of a later intervention by you with the Chairman.

6. Before making such an approach, we should need to define the objectives:

- (a) Do we want to stop the BBC from showing any programme about the intelligence services?



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- No* (b) Should we be prepared to see go forward a programme dealing strictly with the accountability of the Services and not extending to their functions and working?

7. The Government would be wholly justified in seeking to prevent a programme about the functions and working of the Services, but it is less clear that we should be justified in seeking to prevent a programme genuinely confined to the question of that accountability. This is a matter of which there is bound to be some discussion in Parliament, because of Mr. Cook's Bill on the Security Services; and though the issue of accountability may have come to public notice because of the activities and articles of Duncan Campbell, it is arguably a matter of legitimate public interest. If we were minded not to object to a programme on accountability, however, the difficulty would be to make sure that it was confined to that: on its own it would be a pretty boring and unvisual subject. And its conclusion can be taken as foregone: how can it fail to conclude that the intelligence services ought to be more publicly accountable?

8. It must not be forgotten - the BBC will be acutely sensitive to the point - that the Government has the power to ban any programme. This power is conferred on the Home Secretary by the BBC Charter. It has been used to prevent the BBC from broadcasting certain types of programmes at certain times, (e.g. political programmes in the two weeks before an election), but it has never been used to ban a particular programme. Its use, or the threat of its use, to ban a programme about the intelligence services would of course produce a tremendous hoo-ha, inside the BBC, in the Press and in Parliament, about censorship. But, if we were convinced that the programme was likely to cause grave damage to the intelligence services, it might be right to risk the hoo-ha and use the power.

9. The threat of its use would be an element in the tactics of handling the BBC. They will believe - rightly - that the Government will be very reluctant to use the power. They may even calculate that the Government would not in the last resort bring itself to do so. If they believe that, the threat to use it may



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simply lead them to call the Government's bluff. Even if they believe that the threat is for real, the effect of making it may be to make them feel that they can simply shuffle the responsibility off on to the Government. But the BBC will not want the Government to exercise the power, if they can avoid it: they would see it as the first step down a slippery slope of Government exercise of veto on programme content; once the Government had banned a programme on the intelligence services, it would (they would calculate) be easier next time to ban a programme on - say - the Provisional IRA; and the BBC would know that, whatever hoo-ha is aroused, no Government was going to deny itself the power of veto which successive BBC Charters have given successive Governments.

10. So for both parties - the Government and the BBC - the power of veto has many of the qualities of the nuclear deterrent.

11. If Ministers want to try to prevent the BBC from showing any programme about the intelligence services, it will be helpful to know, before any meeting with Sir Ian Trethowan, whether they are ready to exercise the power of veto, if necessary.

12. If we are content to settle for a programme about accountability only, it should not come to the point of having to decide whether to exercise the power, but the BBC ought to be given the clear impression that we have not excluded the use of the power.

13. If there is to be a higher-level approach to the BBC now, it might take one of the following possible courses:-

Either

- (a) The activities of Duncan Campbell, and the interest and activity they are generating (particularly in circles whose political motivation is suspect) have some effect on the morale and effectiveness of the intelligence services. But they are very much minority stuff, and so long as all this is confined to the columns of the New Statesman, The Leveller and left-wing papers of that kind, and to a small group of left-wing MPs, the damage is containable. ~~THE~~ BBC Panorama



TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

programme would be a very different kettle of fish. It would give respectability to the activities of Campbell; it would spark a much wider curiosity about the intelligence services; other MPs and other newspapers would feel obliged to jump on the bandwagon; and the resulting damage to the morale and effectiveness of the Services could be very serious indeed. That of course is what Campbell and others are aiming at; and it is very much in the national interest that they should not succeed. Please give up any idea of any programme about the intelligence services.

Or

- (b) We know that the Director General is conscious of the potential dangers of showing programmes about the intelligence services, and recognises the limits within which any such programmes should be confined, if damage to the effectiveness of the Services is to be avoided. But the activities and attitudes of Tom Mangold and his team strongly suggest that they do not see themselves as bound by any such limits. We see very considerable dangers in his team being allowed to pursue the sort of inquiries in which they appear at present to be set. We recognise that the accountability of the intelligence services is a matter of legitimate public interest; but could the BBC produce a programme which was interesting enough to be worth showing if it was really confined to the question of accountability? What guarantees could the Director General give us that it would be so confined? If the BBC were minded to go ahead with such a programme, it would clearly not be a matter on which present or past members of the Services could be asked to comment; but we should like to discuss with the Director General how it could be made a balanced presentation. We might be able to help in the selection of people who would balance the campaigners for much greater public accountability.

14. I should like to discuss the matter with the heads of the agencies at my meeting on 23rd July: they may feel that even a programme confined to the question of accountability would be damaging, and if that is their view Ministers



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ought to know it before taking a final decision. But it would be helpful before then to know if you and your colleagues have any preliminary view; and, if you think that we should try to prevent any programme from being shown, Ministers would be ready to use the power of veto if necessary.

15. If we eventually decided to follow the second line - paragraph 13(b) - either as the preferred choice or as a fall-back to complete prevention, there would be further questions for consideration; whether the Government could or should co-operate by giving interviews (the Home Secretary or the Foreign Secretary) and by background briefing; and whom we might suggest as people to approach as possible contributors (Lord Carr, Lord Dacre and Professor Howard come to mind; and Lord Carr could certainly be given discreet support and briefing).

16. We should also have to consider the Government's position on the unavailability of certain of the Services.

17. I am sending copies of this minute to the Secretaries of State for the Home Department, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Defence and Northern Ireland.

*RA*

(Robert Armstrong)

Prime Minister.

21st July, 1980

Are you ready to take a preliminary view on this which can be taken into account at Sir Robert Armstrong's meeting tomorrow?

If so, do you want to prevent any programme being shown? Or would you be ready to settle for a programme confined to the accountability of the intelligence services, provided it could be guaranteed that the limits set would be fully observed?

Are you prepared to use the veto, if necessary; and for the BBC to be made aware of the threat?

Do you agree that the first of any further approval to the BBC should be by Sir Robert Armstrong to the Director-General?

TOP SECRET AND PERSONAL

*RA*  
22vii



SECRET



Security 2

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute A02381 of 18 June 1980 and she has taken note of where matters stand on the possibility of BBC Panorama doing a programme on British intelligence.

C. A. WHITMORE

20 June 1980

12/16/80

SECRET



Ref: A02381

SECRET

MR. WHITMORE

Prime Minister -

Hopeful.

THU

18th

I mentioned at a meeting with the Prime Minister the other day that BBC Panorama were showing signs of wanting to do a programme on British intelligence.

2. Since then there have been informal contacts with the BBC at high level, though nothing has been put in writing. It emerges from these contacts that:-

- (a) A decision has not yet been taken to make the programme; it is no more than a "gleam in the eye".
- (b) If the programme goes ahead: considerations of national security will not be overlooked; the BBC will not allow it to be used as a platform for "knockers" of British intelligence; it would be about the political control of intelligence services and would not be confined to British services.

3. Our general impression is that it is doubtful whether any programme will be transmitted; and if it is it will not be for some considerable time.

RA

(Robert Armstrong)

18th June 1980